

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANAA 02342 141042Z

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BLASTS CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT HAMDI IN CLOSING SPEECH TO SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF CONFEDERATION OF YEMENI DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATIONS NOVEMBER 13 LAUNCHED BLISTERING ATTACK ON CORRUPTION THAT INCLUDED BLUNT CRITICISM OF SENIOR OFFICIALS, ARMY OFFICERS AND TRIBAL SHAIKHS.

2. COMMAND COUNCIL PRESIDENT IBRAHIM AL-HAMDI IN CLOSING SPEECH NOVEMBER 13 AT SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF CONFEDERATION OF YEMENI DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATIONS (A GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION OF PRIVATE LOCAL SELF-HELP COOPERATIVE) LAUNCHED A BLISTERING ATTACK ON CONTINUING CORRUPTION IN YAR. HE NOTED THAT REFORMS DO NOT COME BY ISSUING DECREES AND CANNOT BE PURCHASED LIKE COMMODITIES, BUT MUST COME FROM CONDUCT AND CONSCIENCE OF EVERYONE. PRONOUNCEMENTS CONDEMNING CORRUPTION AND ANARCHY WERE NUMEROUS, BUT WERE NOT REFLECTED IN PEOPLE'S CONDUCT.

3. IN REMARKABLY FRANK STATEMENT, HAMDI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SANAA 02342 141042Z

THERE OF SIZEABLE AMOUNT OF CHAOS AND REGRETTABLE PROBLEMS WITH

MILITARY AND SECURITY FORCES. THEREFORE THESE FORCES WHO HAD TAKEN POWER STILL HAD TO PROVE THAT THEY MEANT WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT REFORMS.

4. HAMDI CALLED ON ALL PERSONS TO MEET RESPONSIBILITIES AND NOT TO INTERPRET REFORM OBJECTIVES FOR THEIR OWN WHIMS AND INTERESTS. HE SAID EDUCATED PERSONS WERE TAKING REFORM OBJECTIVES TO MEAN THEY SHOULD RECEIVE MINISTERIAL SALARIES, HIGH POSTS, A CAR, AND MORE MONEY TO BUILD A HOUSE (BUILDING OF EXPENSIVE NEW HOUSES TO RENT TO FOREIGNERS IS A PREOCCUPATION OF ALMOST ALL SENIOR OFFICIALS HERE). SHAIKHS VIEWED REFORMS AS JUSTIFICATIONS FOR MORE SUBSIDIES AND STIPENDS. CITIZENS EXPECTED GOVT TO KNOW EVERY CORRUPT OFFICIAL WITHOUT REPORTING THEM. SENIOR OFFICIALS TOOK REFORM TO MEAN HIGHER BUDGET TO SATISFY THEIR INDULGENCES, FREE TICKETS AND GRANTS FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT ABROAD, WHICH THEY INSIST NOW MUST BE DONE IN LONDON AND NOT LOWER-PRICED CAIRO.

5. IN CLOSING, HAMDI GAVE WARNING THAT MILITARY WOULD NOT WITHDRAW UNTIL CORRUPTION AND CHAOS CONTROLLED. HE ASKED EVERYONE TO DEVOTE FIVE MINUTES A DAY TO EXAMINE THEIR OWN BEHAVIOR, ASKING WHY PEOPLE, FOR EXAMPLE, COULD NOT EVEN STOP USING GOVERNMENT VEHICLES FOR PRIVATE PURPOSES.

6. COMMENT: HAMDI'S COMMITMENT TO END -FAWDA WA FASAAD" (CHAOS AND CORRUPTION) HAS BEEN STATED FROM VERY BEGINNING OF JUNE 13 " CORRECTIVE MOVEMENT" AND IS ITS STATED JUSTIFICATION. HE HAS CLEARLY NOT MADE MUCH PROGRESS, A FACT NOTED CYNICALLY BY YEMENIS WHO NEVERTHELESS DO NOT QUESTION HIS SINCERITY AND HONESTY. CORE OF PROBLEM IS THAT WHILE HAMDI CONTROLS MILITARY AND SECURITY FORCES, HE DOES NOT HAVE MONOPOLY ON POLITICAL POWER IN COUNTRY. CONSEQUENTLY HE MUST PARTICIPATE AS "FIRST AMONG EQUALS" IN BARGAINING AND MANEUVERING TO CONSENSUS AMONG MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURES, SYSTEM WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED YARG SINCE MODERATE REPUBLICANS TOOK POWER IN NOV 1967. SYSTEM IS PERMEATED BY EXTERNAL SUBSIDIES (MAINLY SUADI AND IRAQI), INTERNAL PAYOFFS TO NEUTRALIZE KEY PERSONS AT CRITICAL TIMES, AND POLITICAL SYSTEM BY WHICH CONFLICTS ARE MUTED BY REWARDING AND PUNISHING PEOPLE ONLY marginally. FACT ALSO REMAINS THAT ACCESS TO POWERFUL POSITIONS

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SANAA 02342 141042Z

GIVING ACCESS IN TURN TO SUBSIDIES OR COMMISSIONS IN FOREIGN AID (USUALLY RICH ARAB) PROJECTS IS PRACTICALLY ONLY WAY TO BECOME RICH IN YEMEN. WITH FREQUENT CHANGES IN CABINETS, SUCH ACCESS MAY BE LIMITED IN TIME, WITH CONSEQUENT STRESS ON BUILDING UP RESOURCES FOR LEAN YEARS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. PRESENT CABINET OF PRIMIN AL-AYNI AS NOTED BEFGE, HAND-PICKED BY PRIMIN, IS FULL OF OLD FACES WITH LONG REPUTATIONS OF CORRUPTION AND HARDLY SUGGESTS REFORM MOVEMENT.

7. HAMDI IS, THEREFORE, TRYING IN HIS SPEECH TO GIVE NEW IMPETUS TO HIS PROGRAM OF REFORM AND GOVERNMENT DISCIPLINE IN FACE OF PUBLIC CYNICISM AND MERE LIP SERVICE BY OFFICIAL AND POLITICAL LEADERS. STRIDENT AND REMARKABLY BLUNT TONE OF SPEECH IS MARK OF HIS GROWING FRUSTRATION THAT HE CANNOT CREATE POPULAR WILL OR DISCIPLINE TO CHANGE SITUATION. UNLESS, HOWEVER, HE PUBLICLY PUNISHES SOME SENIOR FIGURES, A PRACTICALLY UNKNOWN APPROACH IN YAR, IT SEEMS DOUBTFUL THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE ANY REALLY FUNDAMENTAL IMPROVEMENT IN SITUATION, DESPITE SINCERITY OF HIS EFFORTS.
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